

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Applicant has carefully reviewed and considered the Final Office Action mailed on January 11, 2010, and the references cited therewith.

Claims 26 and 29 are amended, claims 1-25 and 28 are canceled, and no claims are added; as a result, claims 26-27 and 29-41 are now pending in this application.

Examiner Interview Summary

Examiner Stroud and Applicant conducted a telephone interview on February 18, 2010, to discuss claim language and proposed amendment thereof. The Examiner appeared to agree that the claim amendments overcame the prior art of record, pending further search. Applicant thanks the Examiner for his time and consideration.

§ 102 Rejection of the Claims

Claims 26-27 and 29-41 were rejected under 35 USC § 102(a) (or in the alternative, 35 U.S.C. 102(e)) as being allegedly anticipated by Marcade (U.S. Patent No. 6,964,679). Applicant respectfully traverses the rejection as follows.

Applicant's independent claim 26, as currently amended, presently recites in part:

a main component having a superior end, an inferior end and a midsection therebetween, the midsection comprising a segment having an outer diameter that is smaller than a substantially uniform outer diameter of a segment contiguous with the superior end and a substantially uniform outer diameter of a segment contiguous with the inferior end with a first narrowing transition section bridging between the midsection and the segment contiguous with the superior end proximal to the midsection and a second narrowing transition section bridging between the midsection and the segment contiguous with the inferior end proximal to the midsection;

at least two limbs each having an opening, wherein each of the at least two limbs extends from the first narrowing transition

section in a different direction than an opening in the superior end distal from the midsection or each of the at least two limbs extends from the second narrowing transition section in a different direction than an opening in the inferior end distal from the midsection;

Applicant respectfully submits that the claim language added to independent claim 26, as currently amended, is fully supported in the specification of the present application as originally submitted. For example, support for the added claim language can be found at: page 4, lines 19-22; page 6, lines 9-16; page 13, lines 15-27; and Figures 1 and 9-13; among other locations.

Applicant respectfully submits that the Marcade reference does not teach a main component having a superior end, an inferior end and a midsection therebetween, the midsection including a segment having an outer diameter that is smaller than a substantially uniform outer diameter of a segment contiguous with the superior end with a first narrowing transition section bridging between the midsection and the segment contiguous with the superior end proximal to the midsection, with at least two limbs each having an opening, where each of the at least two limbs extends from the first narrowing transition section in a different direction than an opening in the superior end distal from the midsection. Nor does the Marcade reference teach the midsection including a segment having an outer diameter that is smaller than a substantially uniform outer diameter of a segment contiguous with the inferior end with a second narrowing transition section bridging between the midsection and the segment contiguous with the inferior end proximal to the midsection, where each of the at least two limbs extends from the second narrowing transition section in a different direction than an opening in the inferior end distal from the midsection.

Figure 1 of Marcade appears to show that the diameters are continuously expanding from the midsection 131 through the superior end 110 and the inferior end 112, rather than, for example, the midsection including a segment having an outer diameter that is smaller than a substantially uniform outer diameter of a

segment contiguous with the superior end with a first narrowing transition section bridging between the midsection and the segment contiguous with the superior end proximal to the midsection. In addition, the limbs and openings 110, 132, 134 taught by the Marcade reference actually appear to be synonymous with what might be called the superior and inferior ends, rather than, for example, at least two limbs each having an opening, where each of the at least two limbs extends from the first narrowing transition section in a different direction than an opening in the superior end distal from the midsection.

As such, Applicant respectfully submits that the Marcade reference does not teach each and every element and limitation of Applicant's independent claim 26, as currently amended. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration and allowance of independent claim 26, as currently amended, as well as those claims that depend therefrom.

CONCLUSION

Applicant respectfully submits that the claims are in condition for allowance and notification to that effect is earnestly requested. The Examiner is invited to telephone Applicant's below listed attorney at (612) 236-0126 to facilitate prosecution of this matter.

CERTIFICATE UNDER 37 CFR §1.8: The undersigned hereby certifies that this correspondence is being electronically deposited with the United States Patent and Trademark Office on this 10 day of March, 2010.

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